



## Screen Time Reduction for Children (SCRCH) *Reducing exposure to screen time for children in care*

### **Background**

In November, 2010, Oregon Public Health Institute (OPHI) completed the *Right from the Start Childcare Assessment*, a survey-based assessment of licensed child care settings in Multnomah County, Oregon. The purpose of the survey was to learn more about child care practices around nutrition, physical activity, breastfeeding, and screen time. Key findings revealed that screen time exposure in child care is a significant issue, with high rates of screen time exposure in home-based settings. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under 2 have no screen time; yet, according to survey results, 42% of Registered Family Child Care Home providers allow children under 2 to watch TV or videos. In addition, *Right from the Start* revealed critical gaps in provider training and written guidelines related to screen time.

The convergence of these issues – high use of screen time in child care, and limited trainings and written guidelines on the topic – formed the basis for the Screen Time Reduction for Children (SCRCH) Project. Along with the Screen Time Awareness and Reduction (STAR) Coalition in Portland, Oregon, and the Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) of Multnomah County, OPHI was granted funding by Multnomah County Education Service District's Project LAUNCH to pursue the SCRCH project. The aim of the project was to develop and implement a screen time training module that would present Registered Family Child Care Home providers with the tools and information to reduce or eliminate screen time in their child care services.

### **Project Description**

The partners engaged Registered Family Child Care Home providers in Multnomah County through a combination of screen time best practice training, individual site-based consultation, and financial assistance to purchase materials needed to replace screen time with alternative activities. During training sessions, providers strengthened their knowledge regarding the physical and mental health effects of screen time on young children, and were provided with resources to reduce screen time, perform a self-assessment of their screen time practices, strengthen their approach through interaction with the other providers, and develop policies related to screen time in their settings. Between trainings, a coach supported providers in developing a screen time reduction plan that responded to the unique assets and challenges of their setting. Additionally, providers received a stipend to purchase materials and equipment to aid them in reducing screen time – one provider purchased a multi-child stroller that enables her to take all children in her care to a nearby park.

Providers played key roles in shaping the development of the training module, by providing feedback on the trainings and their screen time reduction efforts through two online focus groups (via QualBoard) and an in-person focus group. Additionally, a pre and post survey, adapted from Let's Move Child Care checklist and the NAPSAC instrument, provided quantitative evaluation data related to the project's impact.<sup>i</sup>

## Results

7 providers completed both trainings, participated in coaching sessions, and participated in online and in-person focus groups. Over the course of the project:

- Providers reported changes in *knowledge* related to screen time:
  - Impacts of screen time on ALL ages
  - Research on the hypnotic and addictive qualities of screen time
  - Value of caregiver interaction over even educational TV
- Providers reported changes in *perception* related to screen time:
  - Screen time in care added to screen time in the home = overexposure to screens
  - Noticing the link between screen time and behavior in children
- Providers made *concrete changes* in their practices:
  - Creating a policy on screen time
  - Setting screen time limits for children in care AND their own families
  - Talking to parents about screen time, and offering resources

## Lessons Learned

There are complex underlying issues which drive screen time use, and these are unique to each care setting, each caregiver, and the composition of children and parents at a given setting - *there is no one size fits all solution*. Child care providers need considerable support beyond training to make changes in their screen time practices. On-site consultation was a critical component of the project, offering providers with personalized attention to their challenges and needs, and enabling them to make lasting change. Resource materials, materials and supplies for alternative activities, and support in policy development are also significant needs. Additionally, peer-to-peer communication is important; providers need ongoing opportunities to talk with one another about the challenges of maintaining screen free settings. To move beyond the child care setting and impact practices in the home, it is critical to support child care providers in communicating with parents about controversial issues such as screen time reduction.

## Next Steps

The SCRCH project was predicated on a plan to develop tools and methods for screen time reduction in child care settings that could be used to promote sustained change beyond the initial training. The training module will be added to the suite of trainings offered by CCR&R Multnomah County as a first step, and the concept is being evaluated for replication in other settings, including applications beyond Multnomah County, as well as adaptations for other audiences, such as home visitors to parents with young children. The partners are also actively seeking to refine and build upon the model, including incorporating additional opportunities for peer-to-peer networking and education, and parent engagement. There is a critical need for continued work in the arena of screen time and child care, in order to bring about lasting change in child care settings, as well as the systems and structures by which they are governed.

For more information: visit [www.orphi.org](http://www.orphi.org), contact **Amanda Peden, MPH** at [amanda@orphi.org](mailto:amanda@orphi.org)

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<sup>1</sup> Data from the pre/post surveys is currently being analyzed.